

New Half-Way House Tavern (Center Chimney House)
Northwest corner of State Route 41
(Gap Newport Pike) and State
Route 841 (Coatesville Road, LR 15045)
Chatham (London Grove Township)
Chester County
Pennsylvania

HABS No. PA-119

HABS
PA,
15-CHATH,
1-

PHOTOGRAPHS

HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY
NEW HALF-WAY HOUSE TAVERN
(CENTER CHIMNEY HOUSE)

HABS No. PA-119
PA,
15-CHATH,
1-

Location: County Route #15045, west of State Route #41, London Grove Township, Chester County, Pennsylvania (Reference: Map of Chester County [by County Commissioners] 1956).

Present Owner: Everett E. Moxley, Chatham, Pennsylvania.

Brief Statement of Significance: This house, erected about 1763, is one of the few with a center chimney found thus far in Chester County. It also contains some good interior woodwork.

PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

A. Physical History

1. Original and subsequent owners:

1. John Fothergill et al. 1762 to Andrew Caldwell.
2. Andrew Caldwell 1762 to Joseph Pennock.
3. Joseph Pennock 1776 to Jesse Pennock.
4. Jesse Pennock 1816 to Daughters, Hannah and Mary Ann Pennock.
5. Hannah Pennock and Mary Ann Rakestraw 1818 to David Hillis and William Kensey.
6. David Hillis heirs 1825 to William Kinsey, their interest.
7. William Kinsey 1831 to Thomas Hicks.
8. Thomas Hicks 1835 to Joseph Way.
9. Joseph Way 1856 to John Way.
10. John Way's exec. 1876 to Joseph Way.
11. Joseph Way 1876 to Israel H. Way.
12. Israel H. Way 1877 to Joseph Way for benefit of creditors.
13. Joseph Way, assignee, 1878 to Chandler Phillips.
14. Chandler Phillips 1879 to John I. Carter.
15. John I. Carter 1909 to J. Clarence Carter.
16. J. Clarence Carter 1922 to Berry E. Moxley and Everett E. Moxley.
17. Berry E. Moxley died 1947 and left his 1/2 interest to wife, Nannie Moxley.

List of the tavern keepers at this place.

1. Robert Baldwin 1763 - petition for license included in Supplemental Material - mentions "a good new Dwelling house shed & Stabling is now erected."
2. Richard Jacobs' petition dated 1765 states "your Petitioner hath rented the house where Robert Baldwin now livith called the New Half-Way house, situated on the Great Road leading from Lancaster to New Port & Wilmington". The license was granted and renewed 1766, 1767, 1768.
3. William Pew in 1769 asked for a license at the New Half-Way house and remained there until 1772; when

4. Jesse Pennock asked for a license at the house where William Pew had been. This Jesse Pennock was the son of Joseph Pennock who had bought the place in 1762 and leased it to Robert Baldwin, Richard Jacobs and William Pew above. The license was granted to Jesse Pennock in 1773, 1774, 1775. That was the last year the place was used as a tavern as far as is known, although some petitions for the war years are missing. Jesse Pennock bought the land from his father in 1776 and erected a mill. He was also a hatter.

The original Half Way House was right in the village of Chatham, about 1/4 mile or less east of this center chimney house. It was owned by the McKean family, and it is probably where Thomas McKean was born. Locally, people have been confused, and this stone building has at times been known as the birth place of Thomas McKean. Included in the Supplemental Material is a paragraph from a newspaper clipping dated Jan. 29, 1880, telling of the house. The article is a long one but worthless copying except this paragraph for it confuses the two Half-Way Houses.

3. Architect, builder, suppliers etc.: Unknown.
4. Original plans, construction etc.: None known.
5. Notes on alterations and additions: This house has been very little changed except for a modern frame addition to the east. The pent eaves, except on the north side, and the cornice returns on the east and west sides have not been kept. The walls have been plastered.
6. Important old views and references:
Views: None found.
References: Clipping and manuscript files in the Chester County Historical Society under headings: London Grove Twp. Lands.
Also wills and deeds in the Court House, West Chester, Pa.

- B. Historical Events Connected with the Structure: Originally, the road from Gap to Newport, Delaware ran in front of this house, which was the reason it was a tavern. Later, the road was changed and left the house off a main travelled road. It is the only center chimney house found thus far in Chester County. It has not been possible to take any interior pictures at present. There is a very handsome built-in cupboard and some good woodwork enclosing the stair way, which is at the west side of the great chimney. The will of Jesse Pennock proved in 1816 mentions this cupboard, the contents being divided between two daughters.

- C. Likely Sources Not Yet Investigated: None known.

D. Supplemental Material

1. Material written Nov. 29, 1763:

"To the Honnourable Justices of the Peace of the Court of Quarter Sessions to be held at Chester for the County of Chester the 29th day of the Eleventh month 1763

"The Petition of Robert Baldwin of London grove township and County of Chester Humbly Sheweth --

"That your Petitioner hath settled on a Plantation on the grate Road leading from Lanchester to Newport on the Run Cauld the Pound Run on Which Said Place a good new Dwelling house shed & Stabling is now erected & your Petitioner Humbly Consaveing the Same may be a Suitable Place for a tavrinn -- It being a very good Stage for Wagons and well Accommodated for Water your Petitioner therefore Prays this Court will Pleas to Recommend him to his Honnour the govener in order to obtain Licence that the Publick may be Sarved. Robert Baldwin

"and we the under Subscribers knowing That the above Petitioner hath good Convenances for keeping a Publick house of Entertainmet and Being Sattisfied that he and his Wife is Sutable Persons for that Busnis We therefore Prays this Court will Pleas to recommend him to his honnour the govener in order to obtain Licence agreeable to his Request."

Alexander Anderson
Josias Allen
George Passmore
David Harland
John Culberson

Francis Foster
Frcis Lamborn
James Pusey
Samuel Daniel
Andrew MacCoy
James Greenfield
David England
John Pusey Jnr
Ellis Pusey

Joseph Pennock ye Elder
Aaron Baker
Joel Baily
Joseph Taylor
Hugh Speakman
Samuel Morton
John Hurford
William Chandler
William Allen
Joshua Pusey

(Endorsed on back) -

Robert Baldwin's Petition
29th Novr 1763
Allowed

2. "American Republican", West Chester, Pa. - Jan. 29. 1820:

"A further description of the 'Halfe Way House.' It is a 3-story stone building with roof projections, or point eaves covering the windows at sides and ends. At one corner of the well near the main outer door, is a projecting stone, with a deep notch or slit out in it, over which travelers threw the reins of bridles when alighting.

The outer doors are very wide, with heavy oak double panneling with immense wrought iron hinges and locks, large enough for a jail. The chimney, which occupies a central position on the building, is a wonderful structure; being 18 feet wide and 5 feet thick. The fireplace had evidently been supplied with logs drawn in by a horse, for which there was abundance of room. In connection with this chimney, is a pair of very substantial stone steps, leading to the second story, and back of this the wine or liquor cellar. The roof is sustained by heavy, hewn rafters and purlings, with king-braces, strong enough for a barn roof. In the garret are old-time relics, corresponding with the ancient house, such as swifts, reels, large and small spinning wheels, etc. Most of the distinctive features of antiquity about the old house have been religiously pursued by its late owners, and no changes made in it except such as convenience and comfort imperatively demanded."

Prepared by Bart Anderson - May 1959
Curator, Chester County Historical Society

PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

A. General Statement

1. Architectural Character: Except for the addition of a modern wood section, there have been few changes in the house.
2. Condition of Fabric: Fair.

B. Technical Description of Exterior

1. Overall dimensions: Two-and-a-half stories, with fireplace and bake oven in basement; 30'6" by 33'10".
2. Foundations: Stone.
3. Wall construction: Stone, modern plaster over it.
4. Chimneys: Stone, in center of house - ca 5' by 18' at base.
5. Openings
 - a. Doorways and doors: All seem original.
 - b. Windows and shutters: All seem original.
6. Roof
 - a. Shape, covering: Fairly steep pitch gable roof, with wood shingles.
 - b. Cornice, eaves: Seem original; cornice on east and west sides is missing, as are the pent eaves.

c. Dormers: None.

C. Technical Description of Interiors

1. Floor Plans: 1 large room in east end of basement, and 2 in west end. First and second floors each have four rooms, and one large unfinished room in attic.
2. Stairways: There are stone stairs from basement to first floor - on west side of center chimney. Enclosed wood stairs are above that.
3. Flooring: Mostly all original.
4. Wall and ceiling finish: Plaster.
5. Doorways and doors: Mostly all original.
6. Trim: Mostly original. Fine corner cupboard in first floor, Northeast corner of the Northeast room.
7. Hardware: Considerable amount of original hardware remains.
8. Lighting: Modern electricity.
9. Heating: Fireplaces remain.

D. Site

1. General setting and orientation: House faces south, on bank very near road.
2. Enclosures: None.
3. Outbuildings: None; modern farm buildings on south side of road.
4. Walks, driveways etc.: None.
5. Landscaping, gardens etc.: None.

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